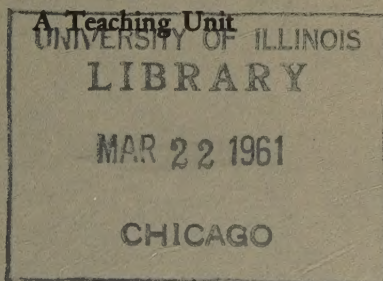


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The Red Badge of Courage

A Study in Teaching for Appreciation

Great Expectations



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The Red Badge of Courage

A Study in Teaching for Appreciation

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If asked the reason for choosing a particular literary work for class study, a sincere teacher would make reference to aesthetic content in his answer. Teachers of literature usually do not choose works deficient in aesthetic values. Yet it is my belief that teachers rarely exploit such content fully; unwittingly they (including myself) fail to develop or bring out the very aspect of literature on which they place such high value. This, however, may be only the beginning of the problem. In spite of emphasis on aesthetic values, teachers seldom know the extent to which their students actually attain such appreciation, especially if class discussions and written tests stress the factual and the associational aspects of the literary work.

Since we teachers of literature do teach for the appreciation of certain aesthetic values, we need some technique by which we can critically appraise literary selections before we teach them. Such study should result in teaching and evaluation which have a sharp focus. In his discussion of the mechanistic, contextualistic, organicistic, and formistic theories of criticism, S. C. Pepper provides a convenient framework for this examination of aesthetic content.¹ In my own illustrative analysis of Stephen Crane's *Red Badge of Courage* I shall treat each of these theories in considerable detail. In the final section I shall consider the extent to which various types of tests actually measure literary appreciation.

¹ S. C. Pepper, *The Basis of Criticism in the Arts*.

The central aesthetic criterion of the mechanistic theory of criticism, the first theory Pepper discusses, is the immediate pleasure which the individual experiences in the work or art. This pleasure arises from enjoying the art object for its own sake, apart from practical, ethical, or other considerations. The amount of such pleasure varies from individual to individual; therefore aesthetic standards are relative—the greater the pleasure of the perceiver, the greater the work of art. Highly discriminating individuals, who are able to recognize the various sensuous elements, are most capable of attaining maximum appreciation.

Thus holders of the mechanistic position would analyze *The Red Badge of Courage* in the light of the immediate pleasure it might afford students. In the case of this novel such a study would surely be fruitful; every chapter is saturated with sensuous elements. This extraordinarily extensive use of natural and man-made colors and sounds yields, as Law puts it, "A series of superb pictures . . .":

Every chapter has its background of yellow roads, patches of mist, purple darkness, foliage moving softly, distant clumps of trees, slopes on the left, trees beginning softly to sing a hymn of twilight—some touch of earth and sky. . . .²

The following passage is a good illustration of the blending of natural and man-made colors and sounds:

The forest still bore its burden of clamor. From off under the trees came the rolling clatter of the musketry. Each distant thicket seemed a strange porcupine with quills of flame. A cloud of dark smoke, as from smoldering ruins, went up toward the sun now bright and gay in the blue enameled sky.

Still another passage reflects the beauty of Crane's description of nature, in this case a scene in a thick woods:

At length he reached a place where the high, arching boughs made a chapel. He softly pushed the green doors aside and entered. Pine needles were a gentle brown carpet. There was a religious half light.

In addition to enjoying the sensuous elements, students would probably react favorably to both the pace and pattern of the action and the design of the plot. In the actual combat, withdrawals alternate with engagements giving an ebb and flow, a rhythm, to the action of the story. Up to a certain point a similar (up and down) pattern is discernible in Henry's quest for self-knowledge and self-control, the mastery of a previously uncontrollable fear, which would undoubtedly elicit a pleasurable response from many young

² F. H. Law, ed., *The Red Badge of Courage*, p. v.

people. Even the reluctant reader should enjoy tracing to its fulfillment a story (novel) whose author paints fast-moving scenes using an economy of language rarely equaled by novelists.

The preceding mechanistic analysis seems to imply that *The Red Badge of Courage* would be eagerly received, almost self-teaching. Yet not all students can maintain an aesthetic attitude throughout the reading of this novel. Without assistance the immature reader cannot apprehend the qualities stressed by the mechanistic theory. Whatever pleasure these students experience is limited to their reaction to such conspicuous aspects of the novel as troop movement and engagements. But the teacher can do much to enhance the appreciation of all his students. First, he can guide them toward the full enjoyment of a wider range of elements. In the novel's wide range of sensuous appeal, from images of tranquil nature to the horrors of war, there is something for almost everyone. Then, too, by calling attention to the pattern of the action and design of the plot, the teacher can arouse a deeper appreciation of the author's artistry, a higher level of discrimination.

The contextualistic theory of criticism does not limit aesthetic value to the sensuous qualities of the physical work of art but views both the art object and the perceiver as interactive in a situation having many aspects. Aesthetic value is determined by the degree to which all the interrelated details of this situation fuse into a vivid experience. Fresh techniques and patterns of expression which transcend conventions and traditions contribute vividness. In eliminating behavioral routine, conflict adds both intensity and functions as the vehicle of the moral values inherent in such experience. Finally, successive perceptions have a cumulative or "funding" effect which facilitates maximum appreciation.

Crane does achieve vividness (the potential for intense experience) in *The Red Badge of Courage* through literary experimentation and the departure from time-honored conventions. First, he treated the war theme as it had seldom, if ever, been treated. Instead of approaching it from the point of view of many painters—officers in heroic poses and glorious battle scenes—Crane chose to rip away the old romance and portray war as the ordinary private sees it. In so doing, Crane brought new subject matter into fiction, accompanying it with an appropriate technique.³ His intense perception gave him the power to probe into the mind of the plain soldier with clarity, accuracy, and incisiveness.⁴ Even those critics who dislike Crane's work credit it with a striking originality.

³ R. W. Stallman, ed., *Stephen Crane, An Omnibus*, p. xli.

⁴ J. T. Winterich, ed., *The Red Badge of Courage*, p. 19.

While granting the profusion of color and sound stressed in the preceding section, the contextualist would call attention to original methods of combination and presentation which transcend the banality of much communication. In achieving what Stallman terms the "fusion of contradictory emotions," Crane creates some truly brilliant images. Each chapter has several such word pictures, but here are some which I consider most striking. In one place Crane wrote: "A yellow fog lay wallowing on the tree tops." In response to the din of musket and cannon firing "the forest made a tremendous objection." During the battle "the flesh over his heart seemed very thin." And, upon observing bursting shells, the youth thought: "They looked to be strange war flowers bursting into fierce bloom." Finally, at the sight of soldiers in retreat Henry "... knew at once that the steel fibers had been washed from their hearts."

Still another aspect of Crane's style, his use of contrast, would, I believe, contribute to the intensity of students' experience with the book. The brightness of the dawn is juxtaposed against some dark or black mass:

In the eastern sky there was a yellow patch like a rug laid for the feet of the coming sun; and against it, black and pattern-like, loomed the gigantic figure of the colonel on a gigantic horse.

In other places the flashes of muskets are set against the smoke of previous firings: "He did not see anything excepting the mist of smoke gashed by the little knives of fire. . . ." Perhaps the most striking contrast occurs when Crane's central character finds time to look around him:

A shell screaming like a storm banshee went over the huddled heads of the reserves. It landed in the grove, and exploding redly flung the brown earth. There was a little shower of pine needles.

* * *

As he gazed around him the youth felt a flash of astonishment at the blue, pure sky and the sun gleaming on the trees and fields. It was surprising that Nature had gone tranquilly on with her golden process in the midst of so much devilment.

In still another spot the trees give soft utterance to a hymn against a background of bursting shells.

Then, too, in order to provide a precise picture, Crane focuses the reader's attention. Smokeless powder was unheard of; thus the smoke from the muskets provides a convenient frame for Crane's description of particular pieces of the war. Within this boundary the reader sees as Henry sees—detail by detail:

It seemed to the youth that he saw everything. Each blade of the green grass was bold and clear. He thought that he was aware of every change in the thin, transparent vapor that floated idly in sheets. The brown or gray trunks of the trees showed each roughness of their surfaces. And the men of the regiment, with their starting eyes and sweating faces, running madly, or falling, as if thrown head long, to queer, heaped-up corpses—all were comprehended.

Finally, the dialect itself provides a freshness and vitality lacking in the rather stiff, drawn-out prose of many classics. As the actual language of the men, it adds color to the reader's experience:

(The tattered soldier to the youth as he stares at the body of Jim Conklin):

"Look-a-here pardner," he said, after a time. He regarded the corpse as he spoke. "He's up an' gone, aint 'e, an' we might as well begin t' look out fer ol' number one."

(A member of the regiment after a successful resistance):

"Lost a piler men, they did. If an ol' woman swep' up th' woods she'd git a dustpanful."

The Red Badge of Courage also has a second source of vividness in its subject matter—war, the most intense conflict possible. Here is life at its most violent peak. Henry, as well as all his fellow soldiers, must come to grips with this "red and green monster," as Crane terms it. But greater yet is the war within Henry which parallels the external conflict. Caught between external and internal forces, Henry is pressed for a decision regarding moral behavior. The reader feels that Henry's private victory over his fear, the growth of his soul, is more important than any advance made by his regiment. Contemplation of Henry's struggle against self (instinctive fear) and tradition, and his ultimate triumph would, it seems to me, be of both intense interest and benefit to students. In their problems of adjustment modern youth must deal with many of the moral values inherent in Henry Fleming's private struggle. Here, though, the teacher must be aware of the ease with which students identify with such conflicts. Some students may become so involved with the practical necessities of battle life that they reproduce the main character's actions and emotions, rather than contemplate them aesthetically.

Thus the contextualistic theory seems to assign the teacher an even more active role than the mechanistic position. Since *The Red Badge of Courage* is quite brief, the teacher might require two readings, one in private before class study and one for class study. Between these readings there is much opportunity to im-

prove the contributions individual students make to the reader-novel situation. Here student-teacher analysis can increase students' awareness of both the factors discussed in this section and the psychical distance appropriate to their study. In the absence of such procedure many students will acquire only a superficial knowledge of the story instead of a rich, intense experience which includes an awareness of moral values.

The organistic theory stresses neither immediate pleasure nor vividness of experience. In this position perceiving the integration existing among the elements of a work of art constitutes the basis for the aesthetic experience. A good art object has no unnecessary element, no part which can be taken away without altering the whole. All sensuous and representational elements are bound together into a single organic structure. Greatness, then, is relative to both the amount of material contained in this organic whole (the vastness of the theme), and the extent or degree to which this material is integrated. All discerning perceivers may share in appreciating the qualities of such a work, but either the absence of integration or the failure of the reader to perceive relations results in an "ugly" aesthetic experience.

In the novel itself the opening scene sets the structural pattern for the whole book:⁵

The cold passed reluctantly from the earth, and the retiring fogs revealed an army stretched out on the hills, resting.

Thus change and motion begin the book and become a recurrent theme. Externally, this theme is manifested in the soldiers' early anticipations of battle and their disappointments. Later it takes the form of their advances and withdrawals. Within Henry, change involves the shedding of old, romantic ideologies and the achieving of selfhood, externally apparent in his returning to the battle after his earlier flight from it.

Imagery of unusual brilliancy acts as the efficient vehicle of this theme. In the second paragraph "a certain tall soldier" went to a brook to wash his shirt. After hearing news of an advance, "He came flying back . . . waving his garment banner-like." Thus a newly cleansed shirt held aloft becomes the symbol of advance, the symbol of battlefield progress. Later, as troops charge, their flags tilt forward and gleam in the sun's rays. In defeat flags seem to dip and die. As Henry achieves the restoration of his self-pride, he expresses a new fondness for this symbol:

⁵ Stallman, p. 194.

Within him, as he hurled himself forward, was born a love, a despairing fondness for this flag which was near him. It was a creation of beauty and invulnerability. It was a goddess, radiant, that bended its form with an imperious gesture to him. It was a woman, red and white, hating and loving, that called him with the voice of his hopes.

Crane also uses nature symbolically to portray the evolution of Henry's selfhood. There is an affinity between the natural elements and Henry's conscience. Henry flees from the battle into the forest chapel where he thinks he will find repose. But there branches and thorny boughs impede his entrance. Inside he thinks he finds nature's sign of approval in the flight of a frightened squirrel. But in this same spot he finds war in nature in the form of a small animal which seizes a fish from the swamp water. The tranquility of this forest retreat is further violated by the presence of a decaying human corpse, the sight of which literally forces Henry back toward the battle. Later when Henry is standing by the body of Jim Conklin, one of his best friends who has died from an "honorable" shell wound, he agonizingly compares his own behavior with that of his friend. Nature responds with a diminished sun: "The red sun was pasted in the sky like a wafer."

From this point on Henry experiences a gradual spiritual development. The chance bump on the head becomes the outward manifestation of his inner wound. As a literal "red badge" it allows him to rejoin his fellows with no loss of face. At this point change is apparent in both Wilson, the "blatant" soldier who is now quite humble (a variation of the main theme which is centered around Henry), and Henry, who felt "a faith in himself had secretly blossomed." His seizing of the flag from the dying color bearer signifies complete regeneration. Then: "He was capable of profound sacrifices, a tremendous death." Nature immediately reflects this new spiritual tranquility; after a successful charge Henry rested: "There was some long grass. The youth nestled in it and rested. . . ." And again as Henry's regiment momentarily leaves the battle front:

He turned now with a lover's thirst to images of tranquil skies, fresh meadows, cool brooks—an existence of soft and eternal peace.
Over the river a golden ray of sun came through the hosts of leaden rain clouds.

Still other aspects of Crane's style serve to communicate the central theme. The noticeably short and sometimes disconnected sentences convey the urgency and confusion of battlefield behavior. In the terseness of this staccato style one can almost hear the cracking of muskets. Some critics accuse Crane of a disconnected-

ness of imagery and scenes, as well as sentences. In my opinion such writers fail to look beyond the specific passage under consideration. Actually, Crane needs a certain roughness to communicate the literal and spiritual confusion which he intends. When viewed in this light, the various elements of Crane's style coalesce in a striking brilliance.

In line with this theory of criticism, the teacher can actively assist students toward fuller appreciation of *The Red Badge of Courage* by calling attention to the absence of superfluous content and the effectiveness with which the imagery and language support the theme. He can also focus students' attention on the magnitude of both the background theme of war and the central theme, the spiritual conflict within a young soldier. But perhaps most important, the teacher can help his students realize that the presentation of this second theme is the author's central purpose. Such procedure will enable students to avoid the pitfall of calling this novel "a realistic war story." Then they should view the horror of the physical combat in the proper light, as the external parallel of Henry Fleming's private conflict. Success in this direction should eliminate the artificial gap between subject matter and method, thus stressing organic unity. Finally, such an approach should enable most students to retrace the author's steps, and successfully achieve the imaginative recreation which the organistic theory of criticism feels is essential to maximum appreciation.

The formistic theory adds still another dimension: aesthetic value as conformity with "natural norms." This position's main concern is with the universality of the type, design, and values of a work of art. Social values which have common appeal for the people of a culture have importance as norms of adjustment, *i.e.*, the love of a father for his son. For the perceiver who is experiencing confusion as the result of the pressures of social restraints, contact with such values in art may result in catharsis, a returning to the norm. Thus a rebellious youth may achieve a more harmonious relationship with his parents. Lastly, recognizing the artistic type and tracing the design also contribute to the aesthetic experience.

In *The Red Badge of Courage* the formistic position would quickly acknowledge a universal theme, war, or man's struggle against man. However, in this novel, as mentioned above, this theme provides the background against which the reader views another equally gigantic struggle, namely the spiritual dilemma of a youth weighed down by conflicting attitudes toward a moral problem of conduct, his responsibility toward society and his group.

Crane does not preach. Rather, he lets the reader contemplate the youth's struggle. In the reader's presence the youth at times contemplates his own conflict and thus gains insight. Stallman points out that far before the realization dawns on Henry, the reader observes that Henry is most a man when he sheds his notions of colossal victories and glorious decorations in the presence of admiring young ladies and fulfills his two-fold responsibility by becoming a part of the "vast blue demonstration."⁶

And at last his eyes seemed to open to some new ways. He found that he could look back upon the brass and bombast of his earlier gospels and see them truly. He was gleeful when he discovered that he now despised them.

With the conviction came a store of assurance. He felt a quiet manhood, non-assertive but of sturdy and strong blood. He knew that he would no more quail before his guides wherever they should point. He had been to touch the great death, and found that, after all, it was but the great death. He was a man.

With this realization came a return to spiritual peace:

So it came to pass that as he trudged from the place of blood and wrath his soul changed. He came from hot plowshares to prospects of clover tranquilly, and it was as if hot plowshares were not. Scars faded as flowers.

* * *

It rained. . . . Yet the youth smiled, for he saw that the world was a world for him, though many discovered it to be made of oaths and walking sticks. He had rid himself of the red sickness of battle.

As far as teaching is concerned, the formistic theory calls for centering attention on both ethical and literary standards. The contemplation of the youth's inner struggle may well provide catharsis for young people who, with Henry, feel that they are boxed in by the "iron laws of tradition and law on four sides." Just as contemplation of the forest scenes returned Henry to his duty, his responsibility to society and his role in the regiment, the contemplation of his struggle and its inherent moral values may provide students release for pent-up impulses and thus enable them to adjust to the norms of their society.

Such, then, are the aesthetic merits of this short novel as viewed in the light of the four theories of criticism. In my estimation it should afford most students pleasure. But more than pleasure, it has potentiality for intense, vivid experience including contact with those aspects of morality inherent in such experience. In

⁶ Stallman, p. 196.

addition, it provides very adequately for the imaginative recreation necessary before the pupil sees the author's work as an organic whole. Finally, in addition to presenting the fulfillment of a literary type, *The Red Badge of Courage* presents a struggle involving values which are central to the adjustment of adolescents to both peer and adult groups.

Let us now take up the problem of ascertaining the level at which individual students appreciate these aesthetic values. A common method of testing for teaching outcomes is the giving of various tests. But in the course of several weeks students become familiar with the nature of a particular instructor's approaches to evaluation and thus direct their study toward the successful passing of tests and examinations. In addition, the writing of test items provides the basis for students' last impression of the work under consideration. Thus, these attempts at evaluation have a direct influence on students' experience with a literary work.

Here I wish to compare the items from an objective test which I purchased with five short essay-type test items formulated in previous years by another teacher and myself for use during the teaching of *The Red Badge of Courage*. My purpose is to determine which items (if any) actually measure the aesthetic values delineated in the previous section.

First let us consider the objective test.⁷ This is a one-hundred point test; ninety multiple-choice, completion, true-false, and short answer questions and ten vocabulary matching items. For convenience I shall consider only the first ninety items. I rated these items using the following key:

- + for those items which seem to be related to the aesthetic values indicated in the previous sections
- for those factual items which seem to have little significance as far as aesthetic appreciation is concerned
- M for those items which would seem to impede aesthetic appreciation (are misleading).

To my surprise, of the ninety items, I rated only thirteen +. Of the remaining seventy-seven, I rated fourteen M and sixty-three —. I shall now try to justify these ratings with five sample items from each of the above categories.

⁷ "Objective Test in English: *The Red Badge of Courage*," The Perfection Form Company, Logan, Iowa.

POSITIVE ITEMS

Multiple-Choice Section

1. One of the youth's greatest worries is that in a battle (1) he might be killed, (2) he might kill a man, (3) *he might run*, (4) he might faint.

Completion Questions

2. The youth entered the battle as a boy ; he came out a (man).
3. "Far off to the right . . . could be seen a handful of stars lying, like glittering pebbles, on the black level of the night" is an example of the author's use of (simile).

True-False Questions

4. The youth once believed there was much glory in war. (true)
5. To the youth, the flag becomes a creation of beauty and invulnerability. (true)

It is interesting to note that four of these five, as well as the majority of the others rated +, seem most nearly related to the aesthetic values discussed under the formistic theory of criticism. Only number three seems to approach the values stressed by any other position, and this item does not attempt to ascertain whether the author's use of language affords students pleasure or vivid experience. In addition to dealing ever so lightly with these two aspects of students' appreciation, this test seems totally to neglect those values stressed by the organistic theory. No attempt is made to determine the students' estimation of the appropriateness of the imagery, language, or general style.

NEGATIVE ITEMS

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. A youthful member of the general's staff is named (1) Atkins, (2) *Tomkins*, (3) Simkins, (4) Rankin.

Completion Questions

2. On the eve of battle, the tall soldier knits a (red) handkerchief about his throat.
3. An aide-de-camp to the general rides a (chestnut) colored horse.

True-False Questions

4. Jimmy Rodgers challenges the tall soldier to a fight. (true)

Short Answer Questions

5. How many prisoners does the youth's regiment capture?
(four)

Finally, here are five of the fourteen items whose inclusion I feel is unfortunate.

MISLEADING ITEMS

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. A red badge of courage is (1) a red satin ribbon, (2) an army medal for valor, (3) a scarlet rosette, (4) *a wound received in battle.*
2. To the youth, real war is a series of (1) *death struggles*, (2) counter attacks, (3) weary marches, (4) strategic maneuvers.

Completion Questions

3. In the timidity of a (squirrel) the youth finds an explanation for his own conduct.

True-False Questions

4. The youth is wounded in battle. (false)
5. The youth is convinced that if soldiers fight like the devil and are never victorious, it is the general's fault. (true)

In my opinion there are no correct answers for numbers one, two, and five. Obviously "a wound received in battle" is the intended answer for the first one. But Henry Fleming received no literal "red badge." Thus, the title of the novel loses most of its significance. Such an item obscures Henry's spiritual wound and his rehabilitation. My objection to number four is now apparent also. In spite of the fact that the intended answer called for "false," Henry did indeed experience a battlefield wound. Numbers two and five can be answered only for certain periods; at the end of the novel Crane does not reveal Henry's specific attitudes toward war. Number three is simply not borne out by the story. Henry does think he has found justification for his fear and flight in the fleeing squirrel. But death is also present in the forest

chapel. His return to the battle signifies that he has discarded this apparent solution.

Considering the list of short essay items is the next task:

1. In what ways does *The Red Badge of Courage* qualify as a realistic novel? Support your points with specific references to the story.
2. Discuss Henry's problem and his attempt to solve it. (Numbers two and three were not used together.)
3. By making references to Henry's actions, give a brief description of the rise and fall of his courage.
4. Explain the symbolic significance of the novel's title. Make specific references to the story.
5. Describe the situation or scene which is now most vivid to you because it was most vividly described.

All of these items seem relevant to the task at hand. (Perhaps sharing in the writing of these items has given me a favorable bias. Also, perhaps the essay-type test item is more nearly appropriate for this type of evaluation.) However, the same heavy stress on formistic values is apparent. Number one does seem directed toward some rather general aspect of style, such as the nature of the dialect and frankness or directness of the description. In addition, number five does require students to supply examples of passages which are especially striking to them. But it apparently does not require a knowledge of why the particular passages are vivid. In general I feel that this test does not determine the extent to which students enjoy the novel or the extent to which they appreciate Crane's use of color, sound, rhythm, and other sensuous elements. There is also a conspicuous neglect of the appropriateness of such aspects of style as imagery and sentence structure. Both of these tests would profit from a revision which broadened the range of aesthetic values considered.

By way of overview, let me observe that far too few students achieve an aesthetic reading of literary works. Further, this paper's systematic study of the aesthetic values of an important novel, as well as teachers' attempts to evaluate the appreciation of these values, reveals the need for the deliberate emphasis of such content in all phases of instruction. The method of this paper, equally usable with any other literary work, should facilitate fuller development of such content and enable the teacher to eliminate discrepancies existing between his aesthetic aims and what he actually measures in the evaluation phase of literature teaching.

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Great Expectations

(A Teaching Unit)

BY ENID OLSON

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"I was very glad afterward to have had the interview; for in her face and in her voice, and in her touch, she gave me the assurance that suffering had been stronger than Miss Havisham's teaching, and had given her a heart to understand what my heart used to be."

If Pip, who had lived through a precarious childhood and a perplexed adolescence, could resolve the stormy years of his life into such a conclusion, does not *Great Expectations* have a message for today's teen-agers? If, as W. Somerset Maugham has written, the main function of a story-teller is to tell a story, doesn't Charles Dickens here fulfill that purpose by telling a story which students like to read?

Great Expectations is a pleasing cross between the tightly knit plot of *A Tale of Two Cities* and the episodic structure of *David Copperfield*, and its first person narrative disarms the youthful reader. As a mystery novel, its plot is as intricate with foreshadowings and suspense as any current whodunit; its kaleidoscopic characters fall into place at the conclusion with as much skill as adolescents find in their favorite TV thriller. High school students find what they like in *Great Expectations*. High standards of literary merit are achieved as well.

Generally, we spend about six weeks on the novel and related activities. I assign the reading as homework at the average rate of three chapters a day. We have daily discussions on the assigned chapters and a quiz at the end of each of the three stages. We include two themes as part of the unit, one impromptu and one written outside of class. I give a unit examination at the end.

Those procedures are basic. In addition, we have an introductory orientation lecture by the instructor and/or special reports by the students. We see one or two film versions of *Great Expectations*. Outside reading is encouraged as a part of the unit: either another Dickens novel, a Dickens short story, or another Victorian novel.

Before we begin reading *Great Expectations*, I try to acquaint the classes with the atmosphere of the Victorian Era and with a brief sketch of the life of Charles Dickens. Both, I believe, are valuable to understand the novel and to make the social satire and the autobiographical traces understandable. Depending on the ability demonstrated in the classes, the teacher must decide whether he is to provide this information through his own lecture or through students' oral reports.

A discussion of the Victorian Age could well cover the implications of the Hungry '40's; Edward Bellamy's analogy of the stagecoach in *Looking Backward*; the evils of impressment, the Industrial Revolution, debtors' prisons, unrepresentative government; and the reforms of labor laws, penal laws, extended suffrage, and extended education.

In Dickens' life, special attention should be called to his unhappy childhood, his education, and his early occupations; his experiences as a law clerk, reporter, editor, and author (the copy-right problem, for instance); his roles as traveler to America, reader, and lecturer; and his literary crusades as a reformer.

The students should be introduced to the novel as a literary type. They should begin to understand the social and economic reasons for its flowering in the nineteenth century, its prestige in the twentieth century, the effects of serialization of Dickens' novels, its definition as a form, and its structure. They should develop a working knowledge of such terms as fiction, novel, first person narrative, episodic structure, plot, theme, setting, characterization, motivation, foreshadowing, melodrama, and caricature.

Dickens' love for many people and many places can be confusing to young students. Therefore, as we begin reading *Great Expectations*, I ask the students to keep two lists concurrent with our reading. One is a list of characters as they appear in the story and their identifications, as far as they are given. This list helps keep a multitude of characters identified as they appear and reappear. The other is a list of settings as they are mentioned, both locales and buildings.

Also, as we read, I assign special words for vocabulary study, perhaps fifty or so in the entire novel. These would be words more commonly understood in Dickens' time and formal words which may not yet be in the students' vocabularies.

For each day's assignment, my plans include a list of discussion questions. These can guide the oral discussion, or they can be the basis of an occasional written recitation; they may sometimes be offered at the same time the three chapters are assigned; more often I save them until the day of recitation.

The following scheme is a guide for the post-stage quizzes. After the first stage, it seems expedient to test the student with a twenty-five point objective quiz, quite factual in nature, to determine his grasp of people, places, and events.

After the second stage, I usually require a quiz of four paragraphs, two to be written on setting and two on plot. Choices for the settings are to describe any two of these: the marshes, the forge and village, London impressions and the Temple, the Thames, Miss Havisham's Satis House. Choices for the plot may be to trace any two of these: the events in Pip's stages of expectations, the plot of the convicts, the plot of Joe and Mrs. Gargery and Biddy, the plot of Miss Havisham and Estella, the plot of Mr. Jaggers and Mr. Wemmick.

At the end of the third stage, I have asked these questions which require short answers for each:

- How has Pip changed during the story?
- Who and what influenced Pip?
- How did Magwitch change?
- How did Miss Havisham change?
- How did Estella change?
- How did Biddy change?
- Which conclusion did you prefer and why?

After about three weeks of reading, the classes should be ready for their first theme of the unit, which I like to have as an impromptu theme, tracing the relationship developing Pip and another character. The student may choose which relationship he wishes to explain: Pip and Joe, Pip and Biddy, Pip and Estella, Pip and Miss Havisham, Pip and Herbert, Pip and Magwitch, Pip and Mr. Jaggers, Pip and Mr. Wemmick.

When the novel is completed, the classes should be ready to write an outside-of-class theme on one of the following topics:

- Does Snobbery Protect Happiness?
- Does Money Make Hopes Come True?
- Does Gratitude Cost Too Much?
- Are the Self-Respecting Repentant?
- Can One Afford to Forgive?
- Is There Value in Unsophistication?
- Is Pride Good or Bad?
- How Can We Measure the Worth of a Person?
- How Does Dickens Use Humor?

The following guide questions should be helpful to the student writer in organizing his content:

1. What significance does this question have in the novel?
2. How does Dickens answer the question?
3. How do the characters illustrate the problem in their own lives?
4. In the light of experiences of yourself or your friends, what do you think the answer is?

When we have finished discussing the entire novel, I test with a unit examination. Because sufficient subjective writing has already been done, I make this exam more objective. I include the highlights of the plot, identification of characters as Dickens describes them, recognition of settings, recognition of significant

speeches, vocabulary in quoted context, and the novel as a genre.

At Urbana High School visual aids help to motivate. A colleague who teaches English literature brought back from England a literary map of Dickens' London with stand-up cutouts for buildings. The classes have used this map with its accompanying identification chart. Students have also drawn their own maps of Pip's London and the village.

Two recent film versions of *Great Expectations* are available: one in which Henry Hull is Magwitch, and the other in which Finlay Currie is the benefactor. The films, "Background for Dickens' Works" and "So This Is London," are excellent.

Accelerated classes can benefit from more background material by viewing filmstrips called "18th Century England" and "France in the 18th Century," which illustrate historical beginnings of nineteenth century problems.

Films of other Dickens works, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *David Copperfield*, and *A Christmas Carol* will give them further insight into the writings of this literary giant.

The teacher must lead each student individually into the type of outside reading best suited to his needs. Accelerated students who are rapid readers can appreciate another Dickens novel or another Victorian novel. Students of average ability who may read more slowly should be able to manage a Dickens short story (his short stories are actually quite lengthy, by our measurements). One book report, oral or written, is required of each student. If a school library has a dearth of Dickens' writings, encourage students to purchase paperback editions of his work. The teacher of literature thus may create a desire on the part of the adolescent to build his own library.

I found this form practicable for the Dickens or Victorian novel report:

1. What is the title, and who is the author of this novel? Who is the publisher?
2. Where did most of this story take place? At what approximate time did it occur?
3. What is the name of the main character? How would you identify him or her. Briefly describe his personality. What character development did you notice? What was the main motivation for his actions?
4. Briefly summarize the plot. Was the plot more episodic, or compact and interwoven in structure? At what point in the story did you become really interested in the plot?

5. Did the ending satisfy you or disappoint you? Why?
6. What was the author trying to accomplish in this book?
What was his theme?

I have used this form for a report on a short story by Dickens:

1. What is the title? In what book did you find this story?
2. What is the setting for the story (time and place)?
3. Characterize the one or two main characters.
4. Briefly tell what the story is about.
5. With what incident does the climax occur?
6. What is your opinion of the story, and *why*?

I developed the above unit on *Great Expectations* before I discovered a booklet which can help a teacher preparing to teach *Great Expectations*. It is "*Great Expectations: Analysis of Story, Character Studies, General Notes, Questions and Answers*" compiled by H. W. Brown and distributed by the Yale Book Company of Toronto, Ontario. Although it contains more aids than many students need to assimilate, it may serve a practical purpose.

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